

Bedford Brown Building
113-15 S. Fairfax Street
Alexandria
Virginia

HABS No. VA-669

HABS
VA
7-ALEX,
154-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. VA-669

BEDFORD BROWN BUILDING

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7-ALEX,
154-

Location: 113-15 S. Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia

Present Owner: Demolished in 1970 by the Alexandria Redevelopment Housing Authority as part of an urban renewal project in the old commercial center of Alexandria.

Statement of Significance: Built in two sections, this building acts as infill along a commercial section of Fairfax Street radiating from the main thoroughfare of King Street. The southern section housed the offices of a prominent Alexandria doctor. The entire building was later owned by his son, Glenn Brown, a well-known Washington architect.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The building was constructed in sections: the southern portion was built c. 1875; the northern portion c. 1910.

On February 24, 1873, John J. Wheat and wife conveyed to Bedford Brown for \$5,000, the 18th Century brick house today known as 117 South Fairfax Street, and the "vacant lot of ground" adjoining on the north, on which the building now known as 113-15 South Fairfax Street stands.

The 1877 Atlas of the City of Alexandria shows a small brick building attached to the north wall of 117 South Fairfax Street. This small structure was probably built by Bedford Brown, who was a doctor, for use as an office. The earliest record on this property in the office of the Real Estate Assessor for Alexandria shows the following notation: "12 foot front built prior to 1892--17 foot front built approximately 1907." (We know, of course, that the smaller building was there prior to 1877.)

2. Architect: Unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners: It is probable that Dr. Bedford Brown was the first owner. After Dr. Brown's estate was divided in 1910, the building likely received another addition. In this partition, his son, the prominent Washington architect, Glenn Brown, received the property at 117 and 113-15 South Fairfax Street. On

February 21, 1918, Glenn Brown conveyed the two properties to Thomas C. Rawlett and Lena M. Rawlett for \$10 "and other valuable considerations."

B. Historical Events and Persons connected with the Structure:

In Memories 1860-1930, Washington architect Glenn Brown (1854-1932) recounted his father's move to Alexandria and his aspirations for his son:

My father, after serving four years as surgeon in the Confederate Army, moved to Alexandria, Va., to be near my mother's family who lived in Washington. Here he began again the practice of medicine. His practice in the South had been utterly destroyed by the devastating reconstruction days which were so ruinous to the South. He never forgot his inherited and acquired southern tastes and principles. I was slated for the medical profession in my youth as my father thought only medicine, law or the ministry were callings fitting a gentleman.

But Glenn Brown did not follow his father's wishes. He instead became an architect of some note in Washington and between the years 1899 and 1913, he served as Secretary-Treasurer of the American Institute of Architects. He is perhaps best remembered for his role in organizing the American Institute of Architects to demand that private architects receive architectural commissions from the Federal government, which had since the early 1850's relegated all official design to the Supervising Architect of the Treasury. This provision was embodied in the Tarsney Act of 1893. Brown was also instrumental in rallying similar architectural forces to persuade Congress that, as a fitting episode in commemoration of the Centennial of the removal of the Federal government to Washington, a new plan be developed for the city of Washington, based on the original L'Enfant plan, but to be updated by the profession's outstanding designers. The result of this effort was the influential McMillan plan drawn up in 1901-02.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Alexandria Deed Books 2, p. 501; 59, p. 361; 66 p. 494; 92, p. 490; 93, p. 415.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Glenn Brown, Memories 1860-1930 (Washington, D.C.: W. F. Roberts Co., 1931).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

The two-story structure, built in sections, is notable for its simplicity.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Two stories, adjacent two-bay front and three-bay front.
2. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick, common bond.
3. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The entrance to 115 S. Fairfax is situated to the left of the two-bayed building; the entrance to 113 S. Fairfax is to the left of the three-bayed building and recessed.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The windows are marked by wooden lintels.
4. Roof: Low pitched roof.

C. Description of Interior:

Two-room plan and modified side-hall plan.

D. Site:

The building faces eastward along the west side of Fairfax Street.

Prepared by Mrs. Hugh B. Cox of
The Historic Alexandria
Foundation
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Edited by
Antoinette J. Lee
November 1975

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken in 1968 to document the commercial and residential buildings of downtown Alexandria which were to be demolished in an urban renewal project. The project was cosponsored by the Historic Alexandria Foundation and the Historic American Buildings Survey. Mrs. Hugh B. Cox was the historian and George Eisenman supplied the photographs. The material was edited and updated in 1975 by Antoinette J. Lee, working on contract with HABS.